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CONCORD AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

AN ORATION

DELIVERED ON THE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-
FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF CONCORD FIGHT

APRIL 19, 1900

BY

CHARLES J. BONAPARTE

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The events of April 19th, 1775, have given rise to much discussion and some controversy respecting matters of personal or local, rather than of general, interest: it is, perhaps, needless to say that as to such matters I make no claim to speak with authority. There are two subjects, however, on which a word of explanation may not be superfluous.

I speak of the minute-men as "militia," in the sense which would justify the same term if applied to our National Guard or the English Volunteers or Yeomanry: all may be fitly called "militia" in contradistinction to regular troops, but in each case there was or is a different force *legally* entitled to the name. Had hostilities commenced a few years earlier, the distinction might have been of some practical importance, for the minute-men were organized, in the first instance, partly, at least, because of doubts how far the militia, formed under Royal authority and, in theory, commanded by the Royal Governor, would, in all cases, obey promptly and surely the popular authorities. For these doubts there may have been then some reason, but any difference in sentiment once existing between the two forces had disappeared long before the day of Lexington and Concord; the King's policy had reduced his friends everywhere in New England to a hopeless minority and the so-called "Tories" had been eliminated from the militia as effectually as from all civil positions of public trust: the minute-men constituted, for practical purposes, a part of the militia,

which in some localities was thus organized, and elsewhere more nearly in accordance with the Colonial laws, but was all alike in sympathy with the popular cause and in ready obedience to the Provincial Congress.

My reference to the Quebec Bill is made with a full appreciation of the fact that the distrust and alarm excited by this measure in New England were caused by political apprehensions no less than by religious prejudices: the form of government established by the Bill in Canada was very generally believed to be what the King wished, and intended whenever he could, to impose on the Colonies. It must be owned that the denunciation of this Bill by the Continental Congress for its concessions to the Canadian Catholics appears to have been a rather disingenuous, though undoubtedly forcible, appeal to the strong "No-Popery" feeling of the English people; but I see no reason to suspect the New England ministers of the like insincerity; in their case the discussion undoubtedly served to fan into flame embers of sectarian bitterness smouldering but yet alive.

C. J. B.

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To-day we look to the rock whence we were hewn: we praise famous men and our fathers that begat us, because, through what they did and suffered on this day, the American Nation was born. On the vigil of that great birthday the dwellers in this land were, in truth, "Englishmen of New England:" ere the next sunset they owned and assured to their children hopes and memories, thoughts of pride and sadness, in brief, a national consciousness, wherein Englishmen could have no part: on that evening Englishmen in New England were strangers and enemies. The story which gives meaning

to our meeting is now an old story, but again it claims a hearing, for it tells us how and why we are Americans.

Each of the three great civil wars among men of English speech was forerun by a season of anxious, gloomy, painful calm as the storm lowered before it broke. The dread issues were already joined; argument and compromise and judicial umpirage had been tried, and had failed; all felt, though all would not own, that only the sword's judgment remained, and the hand of each disputant lay on the hilt. Yet the blade lingered in its scabbard; both parties shrank back from actual bloodshed, and, while they paused and parleyed, kindly men still longed, hoped, prayed for peace. When in January of 1642 Charles I left Whitehall war was certain, but only in July did the Parliament order levies for service against him, only in August did he raise the Royal Standard; and meantime men as wise as Falkland and Clarendon yet strove for an accommodation. The South Carolina Ordinance of Secession, adopted on December 21st, 1860, was, we can now see, a virtual declaration of war, but only in the following April did the cannon of Sumter suddenly awaken the country from a trance of amazement, grief and peaceful yearnings to the grim task of national preservation.

The period of sullen, unrestful quiet which ushered in the American Revolution commenced in Massachusetts on October 7th, 1774, when the members-elect of the General Court, having gone through the empty form of waiting two days at Salem for the Royal Governor to qualify them, elected John Hancock as their presiding officer and then, in the words of their Journal:

“Voted, That the members aforesaid do now resolve themselves into a Provincial Congress, to be joined by such other persons as may have been, or shall be chosen for that purpose, to take into consideration the dangerous and alarming situation

of public affairs in the province, and to consult and determine on such measures as they shall judge will tend to promote the true interests of his majesty in the peace, welfare and prosperity of the province.

“Voted, That the Congress be adjourned to the meeting-house in Concord.”

For six months thereafter two governments were face to face in Massachusetts, the King's in Boston, where a strong garrison sustained its authority, the People's at Concord or in Cambridge, voluntarily obeyed by all the rest of the province.

In the closely analogous situation which existed in 1861 throughout the seceded States, the profound sagacity of Abraham Lincoln, or rather, perhaps, his close, intuitive sympathy with the feelings of the people he served, made clear to his mind the immense moral advantage to be gained in the certain and impending conflict by those who should not strike the first blow. In his Inaugural Address, whilst firmly asserting the perpetuity of the Union and the rebellious nature of the whole movement for separation, he yet announced his purpose to use force only if assailed with force. He would protect Federal property, collect Federal revenues, maintain order in the territory under Federal jurisdiction.

“But, beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere.”

And he added :

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.”

The Colonists of 1775 had to deal, not with an Abraham Lincoln, but with a George III. Of this Prince, Mr. Emerson said, with his admirable force and insight:

“In the year 1775, we had many enemies and many friends in England; but our one benefactor was King George the Third. The time had arrived for the political severance of America, that it might play its part in the history of the globe; and the inscrutable Divine Providence gave an insane king to England. In the resistance of the colonies, he alone was immovable on the question of force. England was so dear to us that the colonies could only be absolutely united by violence from England; and only one man could compel the resort to violence. So the king became insane.”

George III lived many years and died insane, but it were nearer truth to say that American Independence caused his madness than that his madness caused American Independence: he was never more himself, never showed more clearly what manner of man he was made than when he forced national life on our fathers. We are now old enough and strong enough to be just: he was a man of worthy purpose, of strict morals, of sincere piety; according to his lights, he was a good man; but his lights were dim and flickering. Proud, prejudiced and stupid, always prone to hold the promptings of his passions for the voice of conscience and to make a point of honor of obstinacy in folly, he mounted the throne at a moment of peculiar corruption and meanness in the political life of Britain. He found authority and honors usurped in turn by a few selfish, unscrupulous and greedy noblemen, who gained and lost power through the vicissitudes and the perfidies of a “Spoils” system, differing from our own in incidents but not in essence. The aim of his early years was to free the Crown from this degrading tutelage and, for a time and in a measure, he succeeded, but, like some professed reformers of later days, only by mak-

ing himself a great part of the thing to be reformed. He supplanted the "Rings" of the Whig aristocracy by adopting their methods; during the years of his personal ascendancy in the government he may not be unfairly described as a crowned "Boss." All branches of the public service and both Houses of Parliament swarmed with "the King's friends," in other words, his creatures and parasites; and yet, as it is always and everywhere the nature of a Boss to dislike and distrust ability and strength, his advisers in the days of his real power were ever small men; he loved and, while he could, he chose purblind counsellors, incapable ministers, bungling generals; mediocrity of intellect and servility of character were then passports to Royal favor. Such a man could have nothing of Lincoln's patience with misguided fellow-countrymen, nothing of Lincoln's tenderness for the momentary unreason of a free people.

"He ever warred with freedom and the free"

"Nations as men, home subjects, foreign foes,"

"So that they uttered the word 'Liberty!'"

"Found George the Third their first opponent . . ."

His one remedy for disaffection in the colonies was always force; at first, force threatened; when threats had proven vain, force in act. He constantly urged successive ministers, governors, generals to deal a blow at the universal, though pacific, insurrection and its leaders, and at last General Gage prepared to meet his master's wishes.

This peaceful inland town became during the autumn and winter of 1774 the true Capital of Massachusetts. Here the Committees of Safety and of Supplies of the Provincial Congress gathered together a large mass of stores, arms and munitions of war in readiness for the day of need, which all felt must come, though few or none would hasten its coming; and

here, or within a little distance, were constantly the members of those committees, the most prominent and active popular leaders in the province. At this point the Royal Governor determined to strike; by a swift and secret night march he hoped to surprise the town, to destroy the accumulated stores, and, perhaps, if fortune favored him, to seize and bring back to prison and punishment some of those who inspired and guided the colony's resistance. The execution of this project was finally fixed for the night of April 18th, but during the day General Gage became aware that the townspeople suspected his purpose, which, in truth, had been conjectured both within Boston and without for several days. He ordered all the roads to be heavily picketed and strictly forbade anyone to leave the town; but such tardy precautions were of little avail against a whole community of quick-witted Yankees, and had been anticipated by the patriotism and foresight of Paul Revere. As that unsolicited herald of their coming rode off into the midnight, eight hundred British soldiers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Smith, set forth from Boston on the fateful expedition which was to fix the course of history and give a new nation to the world.

Smith's force marched rapidly through a clear, moon-lit night of an exceptionally mild April, but, as it advanced, its commander became convinced that his purpose was no secret and his coming would be no surprise. In remote homesteads lights glimmered and watch-dogs barked as men awakened their neighbors with Revere's news; alarm bells and signal guns and beacons called together the minute men in the country towns, and along the lanes and by-ways dim figures, mounted and on foot, hurried to obey the summons or bear on the tidings. Colonel Smith hastened onwards, but sent word to his commander that the whole country was aroused and strong reinforcements would be needed; but for this message the first

scene of the Revolution would have almost certainly ended as did its last at Yorktown.

In the gray dawn of that eventful morning befell its first tragedy. Some sixty of the Lexington minute-men, under their Captain, John Parker, had gathered on the town green, when Major Pitcairn, whom Smith had sent with six companies of grenadiers, in advance of the main column, suddenly appeared and, riding forward, commanded them in the King's name to disperse. They looked for orders to their commander, received none and stood still. Pitcairn ordered the grenadiers to fire, at first over the heads of the militia afterwards upon them. Eight of the minute-men were killed and ten wounded; Parker then ordered them to disperse, but before obeying some half dozen fired without orders, and two British soldiers were slightly wounded. From the scene of this exploit of ill omen Smith's whole force now hurried forward to Concord.

Here there had been little sleep; about two hours after midnight the alarm bell was rung by Amos Melvin, the sentinel on duty, to whom Dr. Samuel Prescott brought word from Revere that the troops were coming. Reports, growing more and more definite, of the intended movement, had reached Concord for several days previously, and on the day before the committee had directed that the stores and public property should be removed and distributed among nine other towns; but this measure had been only partially carried out; when the town was roused by Melvin's bell, the first thought of every patriot was to complete the removal, and every available vehicle was called into requisition for this purpose. What could not be carried away at such short notice was hastily but effectually concealed, so effectually that Colonel Smith discovered but an insignificant remnant when he searched the town. Much private property was also sent away, or hidden, and many of the non-combatants retired to the neighboring woods, so that the

British soldiers found Concord well-nigh deserted. Meantime the several companies of minute-men mustered on the Common were joined by some militia from Acton and Lincoln and took up a position on the Lexington road. Soon after sunrise the soldiers appeared. As they approached, Colonel James Barrett, who commanded all the forces in the vicinity by appointment of the Congress, ordered the militia to fall back to an eminence called Ponquetasset Hill, and await reinforcements; as a result of this retreat, the British entered the town unopposed. Colonel Smith stationed three companies of grenadiers at the North Bridge and a smaller force at the South Bridge to secure his rear, and then proceeded, with but scanty success, to search the town for the stores he was ordered to seize. Three hours' rummaging, on the part of his men, however, cost the colonists only thirty barrels of flour, sixteen carriage wheels, the trunnions of three cannon, some wooden spoons and trenchers and five hundred pounds of ball, and he was fain to eke out his achievement by cutting down the liberty pole and setting fire to the Court-house.

As the morning wore on several other companies of minute-men and many individuals joined Colonel Barrett's command at Ponquetasset Hill, so that he found himself at the head of some four hundred men and felt he had a sufficient force to assail the regulars; should this be done? A brief, grave conference was held between the principal officers and some prominent civilians of the neighborhood: as they awaited its issue we may picture the thoughts of the men who stood around in arms. These men were Englishmen; in England were the graves of their fathers, the homes of their kinsmen; to England they had ever looked for comfort and protection; in the past glories, the present greatness of England each one of them claimed a share. Some were old soldiers of the French War; some had fought with savages under the English flag beside Eng-

lish soldiers. The King of England was their own prince, for whom their mothers had taught them to pray, whose name was a household word to all, whose dignity and honor had ever concerned every one among them. And now the hour was come to put all this part of their lives at once and forever behind them. Yes, that hour had, indeed, come; the time for thought of loyalty or conciliation had passed—passed never to return. Their King waged war upon them; the smoke from fires of devastation curled up amid their homes, before their eyes; the blood of their friends and neighbors lay, half dried, upon the grass at Lexington. They could be—they were—Englishmen no longer. God willed it; His Will be done!

As thought the men so said their leaders, and Colonel Barrett ordered them to advance on the North Bridge, adding, as his own farewell to Old England, the injunction not to fire first. The command was then assumed by Major John Buttrick, although Lieutenant-Colonel John Robinson, of Westford, accompanied him as a volunteer. As they approached the bridge the British grenadiers withdrew to its further side and began to loosen the planks; Buttrick ordered his men to hasten, and the grenadiers fired, at first, as at Lexington, some harmless shots to serve as warning, then others, which wounded two minute-men, then a volley, which killed Isaac Davis, of Acton, captain of the leading company, and one of his men. When they fell beside him, Buttrick called out: "Fire, Comrades! In God's name, fire!" and the war of the American Revolution began.

Three of the grenadiers were killed, nine were wounded; the survivors retreated, in some haste and confusion, towards the town. The Americans pursued them a short distance beyond the bridge, then halted and fell back to a position of some strength, where they awaited an attack. Colonel Smith seems to have thought of making one, but he was embarrassed and

alarmed by the isolation of his command and the open hostility of the country, and after irresolutely marching and counter-marching his now tired men in various directions, at noon he began his retreat.

He may be blameless, but his expedition was a blunder worse than a crime. It convicts the dull, angry prince who urged it, the dull pedantic officer who planned and ordered it, of such hopeless blindness, of such fatal delusions as to the things and the men wherewith they dealt, that to see such men in such places, to see a great State thus made small, an empire thus mutilated and all the fruits of statecraft and valor thus squandered will awaken, in some minds, greater indignation than the sin of David or the treason of Macbeth. Every eye and every ear in English America was then bent on Massachusetts; throughout Southern New England, at New York, at Philadelphia, by the shores of the Delaware and the Chesapeake, through the Carolinas to the far Savannah, men waited breathless with Patrick Henry for that North wind which might bring them the clash of arms. When this came, it swept the whole country as a whirlwind and before it all respect for royal authority, all loyalty to the King or the Mother Country vanished like chaff in the hurricane's path. As spread tidings of the blood spilt at Lexington, of the open strife at Concord, King George's realm shriveled, and when all the colonies which were yesterday his knew what he had willed and his soldiers had done, they were already, in all but name, Free and Independent States.

General Gage had proof ere nightfall what his master's policy and his own obedience meant to both. As Colonel Smith retired from Concord the Americans advanced and, moving by a shorter route, came into collision with his force at Merriam's Corner, a little more than a mile from the town; the sharp skirmish which ensued was followed by another and yet an-

other, at ever shorter intervals, until the rattle of musketry became practically continuous and almost every step of the returning column was marked by a blood stain. In their morning's work Smith and Pitcairn had sown the dragon's teeth, and all about them the earth gave up armed men. Fresh enemies awaited the British at every cross-road, hurried to assail them by every lane and wood-path, were hidden in every thicket and hedgerow. Harassed on all sides, the weary soldiers moved slowly towards Boston, parting each moment from dying comrades, adding at every rod to the gruesome load of the wagons in which their wounded painfully jolted. At Lexington they were fiercely attacked by the survivors of Parker's company and paid a heavy reckoning for their deed at dawn. At this point, surrounded and sore beset, they were well-nigh brought to bay; but, encouraged by their officers and fighting to better advantage as their foes came to closer quarters, they broke through the circle of flame and struggled onwards, until, about a half mile beyond Lexington, they saw with delight the red coats of friends. In compliance with Smith's request, though rather tardily, Gage had sent to his succor twelve hundred infantry and two cannon, under the command of Lord Percy, and, sheltered by these fresh troops, the distressed column, decimated and now completely spent, had a few moments' respite.

Percy's arrival saved Smith's command from destruction, otherwise certain, but it did not end the conflict. He made no attempt to hold his ground, but, after a half hour's breathing spell for Smith's exhausted men, the combined force resumed its march to the sea. Meantime the Americans also were reinforced; indeed, Percy was now pursued and assailed by a little army of minute-men, and, although they were loosely organized and ill equipped, the intelligence and courage of the men filled the want of leadership and arms. The combat grew

hotter and more deadly as the shadows lengthened; the British suffered constantly more and more severely from the fatal aim of marksmen who lurked behind rocks and trees, sheds and fences, houses and barns, and, exasperated by the relentless assaults of their unseen foes, often fired the buildings which might afford these shelter. As has frequently happened since to British soldiers, the loss of officers was disproportionate to their number, and Lord Percy ordered such as were mounted to walk with the men. Finally, just at sunset, the sorely-tried troops reached Charlestown and were sheltered by the guns of their ships. General William Heath, who had assumed command of the Americans, here stopped the pursuit; when the stars again shone the Royal Governor was besieged in Boston with all his soldiers, and, in Massachusetts, King George reigned over such ground as their bayonets guarded, and no more.

From the story of Concord Fight our thoughts turn naturally to the American Revolution. To form any fair judgment of its fruits to mankind, much more to adequately discuss them, one should live later than our time or be gifted with seraphic foresight. The myriad streams of human destiny flowing from that fountain-head may have but begun their course; as they bear us and our brethren onwards, we may guess and dream and prophesy whither they sweep us, but, as to the appointed end and way the wisest man can but answer with the prophet, and the wisest will be first to thus answer: "O Lord God! Thou knowest." We may, however, note its characteristics, for the world has now seen many revolutions, and among these that one wrought by our fathers, that one which fashioned us as we are made, had features which set it apart from others, and to which we, at least, may with profit pay heed.

First, let us bear in mind that it was pre-eminently practical; those who fought and suffered to consummate it knew precisely for what they fought and suffered. There was nothing gorgeously, seductively vague in their aims; their goal was seen clearly, not shadowed by clouds. To a sentimentalist the quarrel might seem commonplace, even sordid; it was a question of money; should the King put his hand in their pockets? That was the issue. Doubtless they spent to resist him a thousand pounds for every penny he asked of them, but yet the American Revolution was essentially a revolution of taxpayers. The King of Great Britain and Ireland was not, indeed, driven from our shores by "business kings" or "money kings" or any "kings" of Wall Street, nor yet by "multi-millionaires" or "Syndicates" or "Trusts" or any other fungus growths of our commercial civilization; but neither was he vanquished by *sans-culottes* or armed paupers. Yonder minute-man was a man of modest substance; his right arm guarded what his hands had earned, and, as such, he gave his money, his labor, his life, not for abstractions or phantasies, not for anything hazy or unreal, but for plain, definite principles based on accepted facts.

Secondly, our Revolution was, perhaps, of all those known to history the most conservative. Our fathers ceased to be Englishmen because thus only could they safeguard to themselves and their children the traditional rights of Englishmen which their fathers had bequeathed them. They were no reckless innovators; τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἥθη κρατεῖτω; ancient customs should prevail, but, with men of their blood and speech, freedom is the most ancient of customs. Of time immemorial Englishmen had ever claimed and exercised the right to tax themselves; they had given of their substance to their rulers as their own conscience and best judgment bade them; were Englishmen less apt for freedom when they had crossed the seas?

Was their birthright lost on the passage, or were they unworthy to rule themselves because, unaided, they had subdued a wilderness and added a realm to the King's dominions? King George was the innovator; they fought against him to defend rights consecrated by antiquity, no less than by justice. And, remember well, they fought for *their* rights, not the rights of all men or of any other men. Frenchmen to the north of them, Spaniards to the south of them, might be taxed at their King's will, ruled as their King listed; no English colonist lost time in thinking whether such things were right or was minded to waste blood and treasure to make them different, unless they should be a menace to himself.

Of yet more moment is it to note that the American Revolution was the work of men whose lives were moulded by belief in revealed religion. When Amos Melvin rang the alarm bell, the first man to answer his summons was the minister, William Emerson, his gun on his shoulder; his act bore testimony to the patriotism of his class and their prominence in the assertion of popular rights; throughout New England almost every pulpit was a rostrum, every preacher a tribune of the people. And as, in this struggle, piety gladly lent a hand to patriotism, so patriotism claimed earnestly and confidently the support of piety. The minute-man was not an atheist or an agnostic or an unbeliever of any shade or form. He had not, indeed, seen the Reign of Terror or the Commune, but, before their day, he knew their lesson. For him it was no matter of doubt that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain; he disowned his King on earth in the name of the King of Kings in Heaven.

A significant contrast may be here noted. The men who resisted Charles I were inspired by a profound and lively religious faith; this is no less true of those who resisted George III.

But the English Civil War inflamed fanaticism and sectarian hatred, and ended, at least for the moment, in spiritual tyranny; the American Revolution served, more, perhaps, than any other event of history, to rebuke intolerance and soften bigotry: among its fruits was and remains a freedom to worship God surpassing any which the Old World had known until taught by the example of the New. The same causes at different times had made the several English colonies in America refuges for exiles of diverse faiths; when the Revolution fused them all into a nation adherents of each community accepted as fellow-countrymen men whose creed was not as theirs, and from this fellowship came quickly mutual affection and mutual respect. In 1776, Reverend Jeremiah Day, of New Preston, Connecticut, a fairly typical pastor of the times, addressed a communication to his parishioners, which illustrates at once the ardent patriotism and earnest desire for the triumph of the national arms which animated the clergy of the established churches of New England and the growth of good-will towards Americans of other creeds which these sentiments induced. He said:

“Considering the greatness of the necessary expenses of the country at the present day, and the difficulty of the times, and being willing to contribute my proportion towards the public expenses, and to encourage the glorious cause in which we are engaged, I am induced to give five pounds lawful money the present year to this society, to be deducted out of my salary for the year 1776, which is more than two shillings on the pound of all my ratable estate, and I furthermore make declaration and promise that all those who are bound by law to pay rates to me, but profess to be of any other religious denomination from us, if they will produce good and creditable certificates that they have paid for the support of the Gospel to the amount of their rates to me for preaching which they have enjoyed within the compass of this year, that is to say, from the

first day of February, 1776, to the first day of February, 1777, shall, in consequence of an application made to me for the above-mentioned year, receive a full discharge of their ministerial taxes. That they should be required to pay something for the support of the Gospel is reasonable, inasmuch as a preached Gospel is a benefit to civil society as well as to the souls of men."

Three years later, in a letter to a brother minister suggesting an improved method of providing by law for their maintenance, the same worthy pastor and citizen uses language yet more noteworthy:

"If the religion of Jesus has been the occasion of disturbing the peace of society, it is not because there is any proper tendency thereto, but because of the corruptions of man counteracting the genuine tendency of religion which requires its votaries to live peaceably with all men. As to that objection against my plan, that it favors heretics equally with the orthodox, I say, let the heretics enjoy this privilege. The way to destroy heretics is not by depriving them of the common privileges of mankind, but by the force of reason and truth."

That experience of common citizenship with men of another faith which could render opinions such as these regarding "heretics" endurable to New England Puritans made them indulgent, nay, did more, made them just to the Episcopalians of Virginia and the Quakers of Pennsylvania, even to the Catholics of Maryland. Yes, only twenty-five years after Judge Dudley's bequest to Harvard, Papists, rank Papists, the Spawn of the Pit, the Dupes of the Lewd One of Babylon, were deemed worthy of "the common privileges of mankind" in a free country, as they were found ready to bear an ungrudging part in the labors and dangers and sacrifices which made it free. The rapid change in popular sentiment on this subject showed how swiftly and strongly worked the leaven of national conscious-

ness. In 1774 the Quebec Bill was vigorously denounced from nearly every pulpit in New England because it recognized the long-established property rights of the Canadian Church and the equal civil rights of Catholics with Protestants in a province where there lived then 400 of the latter and 150,000 of the former, and against the protection thus afforded by law to "a religion fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets" the first Continental Congress formally protested; less than two years later the second Continental Congress invited a priest, previously earnest in the work of the Society of Jesus, afterwards the first Bishop and first Archbishop of the American hierarchy, to promise, as the envoy of the Congress to the same Canadians, should they make common cause with their old enemies, respect for their institutions and privileges and full religious liberty. What had happened meantime? Lexington and Concord!

Finally, let it not be forgotten that the war of the American Revolution was an honest, a truthful war. Our fathers fought for their own welfare and that of their children, for the liberty they inherited from the past and, in duty and honor, should hand on to posterity. They claimed to rule themselves, first, because they had been thus ruled since their country had been the home of white men; secondly, because they could be and would be better ruled by themselves than by a King or a Parliament beyond the seas; and, since the King and the Parliament of Great Britain would not suffer them to do as they would with their own, they shook off King and Parliament and Britain itself, and faced the world a free people. Demanding this, and only this, they were forced to rely on no misleading generalizations, on no strained and sweeping theories, to ignore no facts, to call to their aid no form of sophistry or insincerity for their justification. They affected nothing, suppressed nothing, concealed nothing regarding their aims and motives, consciously

or unconsciously, as to others or as to themselves. The utterance of their diplomacy might well be, and, in fact, was: "Yea, yea; nay, nay;" there was no room in their case and no need for studied reticence, for voluntary obscurity, for artifice or deception in any shape in speech or writing; they knew themselves, they told all men what they asked and why they asked this. As Governor of Massachusetts General Gage issued, in 1774, the customary annual proclamation "for the encouragement of piety and virtue and the prevention of vice, profaneness and immorality," but on this occasion added, for the first time, "hypocrisy" to the catalogue of sins against which he warned the people of this province. This petty and impolitic act was considered, and with reason, a studied insult to the ministers, and, as such, awakened a slightly ludicrous but formidable resentment; but, whatever its motive, the counsel was good. To earn the respect, whether of others or of themselves, a people, as a man, must speak and act and think the truth; Americans merited and gained such respect in their first war.

In the admirable Concord oration of Mr. Curtis, that oration which, for those who heard it, must surely make another seem as the reverse side of a tapestry, there is mentioned a young minute-man of twenty-two, who, after serving with conspicuous gallantry during the entire day, was mortally wounded just before its close. He sent a message to the girl he loved, a short and very simple message, which yet deserves a thought: "Tell her," said the dying boy to his father, "tell her that I am glad I turned out this morning." May we rightly share his gladness when he felt his allotted task was done and well done, his free offering was forever accepted? In this day of Hague conferences and arbitration treaties may we, we who stand on the threshold of the twentieth century, we who hear many words about the barbarism of warfare, may we find cause to rejoice when we picture that shadowed home, when we see the tears fall

on that young grave, when we remember that as he fell, so fell many thousands, as mourned those who loved him so mourned a whole people for seven long, weary, bloody years? Yes, we may, we should; such memories are our truly priceless treasure, more precious a thousandfold than wealth and comfort, than knowledge and material progress, than art and refinement of manners. All these things are good, but all of them have been denied to nations which the world could have ill spared; that which is truly vital, that which, if wanting, can be replaced by no vanity of riches and no pride of learning, no grandeur and no beauty is—men; a national existence which lacks these

“Is but as ivy leaves around the ruined turret-wreath,”

“All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath:”

a living crust on a dead core.

When the wisdom of those who framed our Constitution declared a well-regulated militia necessary to the security of a free State, there was a deeper meaning to their words than all readily see; these words are no less true for times of peace and tranquillity than for times of war or discord. In such a state military virtues are a part of civic worth; a despotism or an oligarchy may have effeminate subjects defended and overawed by armed hirelings, but in a democratic republic no man is a good citizen who does not feel himself a soldier in reserve; he only is truly fit to share in the government of a free people who will leave his interests and his pleasures, his home and all he loves, will give up everything which makes life precious and, if need be, life itself, not in levity or anger, not for vain-glory or mere hire, but in humble, cheerful, unquestioning obedience to his country's call to arms. Are Americans such men? For answer look to the record of lives and deaths like those of him whose parting words you have just heard. To him we may say, as the Jews to Maccabæus:



“Though thou art fallen, while we are free”

“Thou shalt not taste of death!”

“The generous blood that flowed from thee”

“Disdained to sink beneath;”

“Within our veins its currents be,”

“Thy spirit on our breath!”

If then, brethren, you see too often in our public life but a swinish scuffle for sordid, selfish gain, you find among our public men figures for the slow, unmoving finger of scorn to point at, there are wafted to you with voices of public opinion breaths of foulness and malice and lies, you are sickened by the greed, the vulgar vanity, the cant, the falsehood, the grossness which degrade and poison our national being, I bid you look to the minute-man! He is the real American; he is our true fellow-countryman; he lives in the Nation's life and, while he so lives, while we can yet claim kinship with him and not blush for our own unworthiness, then, under God's Providence, America will live as a Nation, and live in freedom and honor among men!